PATTERNS OF POWER

Elite Chaos

How Orders Actually Change — That Structural Change Comes Never from the Rising of the Ruled but from the Fracture, the Exhaustion, the Conquest, or the Overbreeding of the Elite Who Rule Them

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Preface

Every study in this project until now has answered one question: why does a durable order *hold*? It holds because beneath it is a floor of force and over the floor a managed belief; because the belief makes the force cheap; because the whole is a binding settlement of who owns what among the armed. All of that explains stability. This study takes up the question those leave open — how does an order ever *change*? — and quarrels with the answer the modern world is taught.

That answer is that the people change things: that the common man, ground past endurance, rises; that he has had enough; that he grows enlightened and throws off his chains. It is the liberal-democratic story of progress, and as a causal account it is mostly false. Structural change does not come from below, because the common man commands no organized force and a durable order is an armed settlement, alterable only by those who command organized force. A rising against an intact floor is therefore crushed, with a regularity that approaches a law — the German peasants in 1525, the springtime of peoples in 1848. Change comes only when the floor of force itself cracks, and it cracks in four ways: the elite *fractures* and arms the people against itself; it *exhausts* its floor in great-power war and must pay the survivors; it is *conquered* by a rival elite and remade at bayonet-point; or it *overbreeds*, seating fewer claimants than it produces, until its surplus turns revolutionary and leads the crowd as fuel.

In every case the common man is present at the opening — as soldier, as crowd, as the weight one broken faction swings — but never as its author. The study holds its own thesis honestly against the strongest objection: that his pressure, though never the proximate agent, is a real cause, the credible threat that forces a cornered elite to widen the settlement rather than fight on. And it closes on the reason the flattering story is so universal — that it is the settlement's own account of itself, telling the newly admitted they rose and won rather than that they were let in when a frightened elite found it cheaper to deal them in. The argument leans on Skocpol on state breakdown, on Goldstone and Turchin on elite overproduction, and on Acemoglu and Robinson on the franchise as a credible commitment; each is explained where it is used.

A Note on This Collaboration

As throughout, the spine is Thomas J. Bryan's — in this case a claim he held from the outset of the project and the model resisted at the start, having absorbed, like most readers, the progressive history in which the people rise and the arc bends. The model has come round, not from deference but because the structure the project built makes the claim very nearly a theorem: a settlement of the armed is changed by the armed, and the common man is not among them. The documentary work has been to test the claim against the serious literature on revolution and democratisation, and to find it largely confirmed there.

The study keeps two disciplines. Where it leans on a scholar it pauses to explain the mechanism in plain terms rather than merely invoking a name, because the argument has to be followable by a reader meeting these ideas for the first time. And it holds its hard thesis against its strongest objection — granting, fully, that the pressure from below is a genuine cause even though it is never the proximate agent — because a claim this disenchanting is worth nothing unless it can survive the case against it. The whole is held, as ever, as tested and not revealed.

The Argument in Nine Parts

I — The Question the Corpus Raises. The project has explained why orders hold; this asks how they change. The answer the modern world is taught — that the people rise — is the settlement's flattering account of itself, and is mostly false.

II — The Uprising That Loses. A rising against an intact apex meets a working floor of force and is destroyed, because unorganized bodies lose to organized violence. The German peasants in 1525, the risings of 1848: a functioning state does not lose to its own population.

III — When the Floor Cracks. Revolutions are not made but come: they arrive not when the masses rise but when a state, overstrained from above and outside, breaks, its elite and army divide, and a crowd that would otherwise be crushed walks into the gap. Skocpol's state breakdown; the common man as fuel, not spark.

IV — The Floor Divides. The first crack — elite fracture: the apex splits against itself and one faction arms the people as a weapon against the other. The crowd does not pry the door open; it is handed through from inside. The English Civil War, the Reformation, the American Revolution.

V — The Floor Exhausts. The second crack — elite exhaustion: great-power war shatters the floor from outside, dissolves the army that held it, and forces the survivors to arm the common man and pay him. 1917; the vote that came home from the front in 1918.

VI — The Floor Is Conquered. The third crack — rival elite intervention: an outside apex defeats the local floor and imposes a new order at bayonet-point. German democracy in 1945; 1989 and the tanks that did not roll. The decisive question is never the people's will but whose army stood where.

VII — The Floor Breeds Too Many Heirs. The fourth crack — elite overproduction, the engine beneath the others: an order seats fewer claimants than it breeds, and the surplus elite turns revolutionary and leads the people as the fuel of its own war. The counter-elite that leads every rising; Robespierre the lawyer, Lenin the noble's son.

VIII — The Weight They Swing. The honest objection: to deny the common man the role of agent is not to deny that his pressure is a cause. The credible threat of his rising is the lever that forces a cornered elite to widen the settlement — Acemoglu and Robinson on the franchise as credible commitment. The line to hold is between proximate agent and causal load.

IX — The Dignifying Myth. Why the false story is universal: the settlement that has widened its circle would rather tell the newly admitted that they rose and won than that they were let in when a frightened elite found it cheaper to deal them in. What seeing through it is finally for.

A Note on Sources

This study connects a claim of the project's own to the established literature on revolution, state breakdown, and democratisation.

How orders break. The argument that social revolutions are not made by the masses but come when a state breaks under fiscal-military pressure from abroad — so that its elite and army divide and a revolutionary situation opens from above — is Theda Skocpol's, in "States and Social Revolutions" (1979), with its comparison of France, Russia, and China and its negative cases of Meiji Japan and Prussia. The mechanism of elite overproduction — an order seating fewer claimants than it breeds, its surplus turning revolutionary and mobilising the populace as fuel — is Jack Goldstone's, in "Revolution and Rebellion in the Early Modern World" (1991), formalised by Peter Turchin as structural-demographic theory.

How settlements widen. The account of franchise extension as a credible commitment — the elite surrendering durable institutional power because a revocable promise cannot defuse a credible revolutionary threat — is Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson's, in "Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy" (2006). Modern works are paraphrased and credited, not quoted at length.

The history. The crushed risings (the German Peasants' War of 1525, the revolutions of 1848), the fractures (the English Civil War, the Reformation, the American Revolution), the exhaustions (Russia in 1917, the Representation of the People Act of 1918), and the conquests (Germany in 1945, the Soviet bloc in 1989) are drawn from the standard historical record.

The lineage. Beneath it lies this project's own framework — the floor of force and the managed belief, the settlement of who owns what, the counter-elite of *Year One*, and the widening of the circle of *Who Owns What* — of which this study supplies the account of change.

Part I

THE QUESTION THE CORPUS RAISES

That the whole of this project has explained why orders hold, leaving one question unanswered — how they change — and that the answer the modern world is taught, that the people rise, is the settlement's flattering account of itself and is mostly false

Every study in this project until now has been, in one way or another, an answer to the same question: why does a durable order *hold*? It holds because beneath it is a floor of force and over the floor a managed belief; because the belief makes the force cheap; because a priesthood tends the belief; because the order is, at bottom, a binding settlement of who owns what among the armed, made to outlast its makers by the sanctifying power of conviction. All of that explains stability. It leaves untouched the one question a reader is bound to ask next, and it is the question this study takes up: if orders are built to hold, how do they ever *change*?

The story we are told, and the story beneath it

The modern world has a ready answer, and it is worth stating plainly because the whole of this study is a quarrel with it. The answer is that the people change things — that the common man, ground down past endurance, *rises*; that he has *had enough*; that he grows *enlightened* and throws off his chains; and that the long widening of liberty and the franchise is the cumulative record of his risings. This is the liberal-democratic story of progress, and it is the water the modern mind swims in. It is also, as a causal account, mostly false — and false in a particular and revealing way. For structural change, this study will argue, does not come from below. The common man commands no organized force, and a durable order is precisely an armed settlement, which can be altered only by those who command organized force — which is to say, by the elite, never by their subjects. When real structural change comes, it comes through an opening in the floor of force itself: through the elite *fracturing*, or *exhausting* itself in war, or being *conquered* by a rival elite, or *breeding* more claimants than it can seat. The common man is present at every one of these openings — as soldier, as crowd, as the body count, as the weight one broken faction swings against another — but never as the agent who makes the opening. And the reason we are told otherwise, the reason the story of the rising people is so universal, is itself a finding of this project: that the story is the settlement's own account of itself, and a settlement has every reason to tell the newly admitted that they won their place rather than that they were let in. This study sets the machine against the myth.

PART II

THE UPRISING THAT LOSES

That a rising of the common people against an intact apex meets a working floor of force and is destroyed — because unorganized bodies lose to organized violence, and a functioning state does not lose to its own population

Begin with the thing the myth cannot look at: what actually happens when the common people, with no fracture above them, rise against an intact order. They lose. They lose with a regularity that approaches a law, and they lose for a reason that is structural and not contingent: an uprising pits unorganized bodies against organized violence, and organized violence wins. Numbers are not force; a hundred thousand peasants with improvised weapons and no command structure are not a match for a few thousand disciplined troops under unified direction, and the history of popular rebellion against functioning states is, with painful consistency, a history of massacre.

The graveyard of risings

The record is long and the project predicts every entry in it. The German Peasants' War of 1525 — the largest popular rising in Europe before the French Revolution, hundreds of thousands of peasants in arms behind a programme of genuine grievance — was crushed inside a year by the assembled princes and their professional companies; perhaps a hundred thousand peasants were killed, Luther himself urged the lords to smite them, and at the end not one structural thing had changed. The slave revolts of antiquity ended on crosses. The risings of the late-medieval poor were broken and their leaders displayed. And the great wave of 1848, the so-called springtime of peoples that swept every European capital at once, was put down almost everywhere within a single year by officer corps that had not divided — the same crowds that had seemed, in the spring, to be remaking the world were, by the winter, dispersed by cavalry, their leaders in exile or in the ground. The pattern holds because it is mechanical. A functioning state, by definition, commands a loyal and organized monopoly of force, and a body that commands such a thing does not lose to its own unarmed population; the words *functioning state* and *cannot be overthrown from below* are very nearly synonyms. So when an order does change, the explanation is never that the crowd was finally angry enough. The anger is the constant. The variable is the floor — and the floor changes only when something happens to the elite who hold it.

PART III

WHEN THE FLOOR CRACKS

That revolutions are not made but come — that they arrive not when the masses rise but when a state, overstrained from above and outside, breaks, its elite and its army divide, and a crowd that would otherwise have been crushed walks into the gap

If the uprising against an intact floor always loses, then every successful revolution must be a case where the floor was *not* intact — where it had already cracked before the crowd arrived. This is the central insight of the modern structural study of revolution, and it overturns the romantic picture completely. The sociologist Theda Skocpol, comparing the great revolutions of France, Russia, and China, found that none of them was *made* by its revolutionaries in the way the myth imagines; each one *came*, in the old maxim's sense, when a state broke under a strain it could not meet. Her account is worth stating carefully, because it is the spine of this whole study. A revolutionary situation, she showed, is not created by the masses deciding to revolt. It is created by a *crisis of the state* — most often a fiscal-military crisis driven by competition with rival powers abroad, a war lost or a treasury bankrupted by war — which the old regime, locked into its existing institutions, simply cannot resolve. And when the state visibly fails at the one thing a state exists to do, the consequence is not first felt below but *above*: the elite divides over what to do, the army's loyalty frays, and the unified monopoly of force that had made the order unbreakable comes apart at the top. *Then* the crowd, or the peasant revolt, which on any ordinary day would have been ridden down, finds that there is no longer a unified floor to ride it down — and walks into the gap.

Fuel, not spark

The refinement this gives to the project's thesis is exact, and it is fairer to the common man than a cruder version would be. Skocpol does not say the people are irrelevant; in her cases the peasant revolts are a necessary *ingredient*. But they are the *fuel*, not the *spark*. The combustible material — popular grievance, the willingness to rise — is present in almost every society in almost every generation; it is nearly a constant, and a constant cannot explain a rare event. What is rare, and therefore what does the explaining, is the *crack in the floor* — the state breakdown, originating above and outside, that for once lets the fuel catch instead of being stamped out. Skocpol's own control cases prove the point by their silence: in Meiji Japan and in reforming Prussia, where the old-regime state was bureaucratic enough to absorb the foreign pressure without breaking, the same era's strains produced reform from above and no social revolution at all. The floor held, so nothing came through it. The question of how orders change therefore becomes the question of how the floor cracks — and there are, in the main, four ways, which the next four parts take in turn.

Part IV

THE FLOOR DIVIDES

The first crack — elite fracture, in which the apex splits against itself and one faction arms the common people as a weapon against the other, so that the crowd does not pry the door open but is handed through it from inside

The first and commonest way the floor cracks is that the elite splits, and one part of it, to win its quarrel with the other part, reaches *down* and arms the common people as a weapon. This is the mechanism hidden inside almost every event the myth files under "the people rose." The crowd does not force the door; a faction of the elite, fighting a rival faction, opens the door from the inside and invites the crowd through, because the crowd's numbers are useful in an intramural war the elite cannot win alone. The popular energy is entirely real — the people who pour through the opening are not actors, and their grievances are not fictions — but it is *recruited, armed, mounted, and led* by one half of a divided ruling class, and it goes where that half points it.

The fracture beneath the famous risings

Look at the celebrated "popular" upheavals and the fracture is always there beneath them. The English Civil War, remembered as a struggle for liberty, was in its bones a war of one part of the political elite — the parliamentary gentry, the merchants, a section of the aristocracy — against the crown and its party; the common soldier of the New Model Army was indispensable, but the quarrel that armed him was a quarrel inside the apex. The Reformation, which the textbooks can make sound like a welling-up of lay conscience, spread and survived because *princes* embraced it — adopted it as the banner under which they could seize church lands and defy emperor and pope — and where no prince protected it, it was burned out; the tragedy of Thomas More, in the study before this one, was precisely that the fight was an elite fight and he had chosen the losing side of it. Even the American Revolution, the founding rising of the modern democratic imagination, was at bottom a colonial elite — planters, lawyers, merchants — splitting from a metropolitan one, and mobilizing a populace as the infantry of that split. In each case the common man fought, bled, and mattered; and in each case the opening he poured through was cut, from above, by one faction of a fractured elite making war on another. He was the weight on the end of the lever. He was not the hand that moved it.

Part V

THE FLOOR EXHAUSTS

The second crack — elite exhaustion, in which war between great powers shatters the floor of force from outside the system, dissolves the army that held it, and forces the surviving elite to put weapons and indispensability into the hands of the very people it rules

The second way the floor cracks is the cleanest of all, because here no one opens the door on purpose: the floor of force is simply *shattered from outside the system*, by war between great powers, and the common man walks through a gap that the war, not he, has torn. Mass war is the great solvent of hierarchy, and it dissolves an order in two distinct ways, one sudden and one slow.

The army dissolved, and the vote that came home from the front

The sudden way is defeat. An army destroyed in the field is a floor of force destroyed, and a regime whose floor has been ground to nothing in the trenches is a regime waiting to be pushed over by whoever is standing nearest the vacuum. The Russian Revolution of 1917 is the textbook case, and it is Skocpol's: the Tsarist state did not fall because its peasants finally found their courage, which they had always had and which had always been crushed; it fell because the imperial army had been annihilated by Germany, the floor of force had literally bled out in three years of catastrophe, and into the vacuum stepped not the peasantry but a disciplined counter-elite, the Bolsheviks, who seized the apparatus the war had emptied. The slow way is subtler and, for the long history of liberty, more important. Total war between industrial states forces the elite to do the one thing the settlement is built never to do: to put weapons into the hands of the common man by the million, and to make his labour in the war factories indispensable — and then to *survive having done so*, which it can do only by paying him. The great extensions of the franchise track the great wars with an almost embarrassing fidelity. Britain's Representation of the People Act of 1918, which tripled the electorate and enfranchised the mass of working men, came not at the end of a march but at the end of a war, conceded by an elite that had just required those men to die in their millions and could not, having done so, credibly deny them the vote. The vote, in the brutal shorthand, *came home from the front*. It was not won by the riser. It was conceded by an exhausted elite that needed his body for the next war and his labour for the next factory, and found, with its floor temporarily cracked by the strain, that admitting him to the settlement was cheaper than holding him out.

PART VI

THE FLOOR IS CONQUERED

The third crack — rival elite intervention, in which an outside apex defeats the local floor of force and imposes a new order at the point of the bayonet, so that the decisive question is never the people's will but whose army stood where

The third way the floor cracks is the most external of all, and the one the myth of the rising people finds hardest to absorb: the local floor of force is not split from within or exhausted by strain but simply *defeated from without*, by a rival elite whose army is stronger, and a new order is installed over the wreckage at the point of the bayonet. Here the common man's role shrinks almost to nothing, because the contest is decided entirely between one apex and another, and the population is merely the territory that changes hands.

Change at bayonet-point

The clearest modern case is the one most often miscalled a triumph of democratic values. German democracy after 1945 was not the fruit of a German popular rising — the German order had been overwhelmingly *popular* in the other sense a decade before — but the imposition of a constitutional settlement by foreign armies that had defeated the Reich in the field and occupied its territory; democracy arrived in the baggage train of the Allied armies, written substantially by the victors and stood up under their guns. The same structure, in less total form, lies under a great many of the changes the progressive story credits to awakening conscience. The end of many a colonial order turned far less on the moral force of the colonized than on the exhaustion or withdrawal of the imperial power after its own ruinous wars. The collapse of the Soviet bloc in 1989 turned, above everything, on the decision of the Soviet centre to no longer send its tanks — the single fact that, in 1953 and 1956 and 1968, had decided every prior rising the other way. The protest in the square is the visible thing, and it is not nothing; but the decisive thing, again and again, was whose army was willing to stand where, and that was settled at the level of rival elites, far above the heads of the crowds whose courage the story prefers to celebrate.

PART VII

THE FLOOR BREEDS TOO MANY HEIRS

The fourth crack — elite overproduction, the engine beneath the others, in which an order seats fewer claimants than it breeds, and the surplus elite, skilled and aggrieved, turns revolutionary and leads the common people as the fuel of its own war against the incumbents

The fourth crack is the deepest, because it is the engine that drives the first: it explains *why* elites fracture, and *who* leads the common people through the openings the fracture cuts. The mechanism is what the historians Jack Goldstone and Peter Turchin named *elite overproduction*, and once it is seen it cannot be unseen. An order has a fixed and limited number of places at the top — so many offices, so many estates, so many seats at the table of the settlement. But the elite breeds, and in good times it breeds faster than the order creates new places, and it also recruits ambitious newcomers educated into elite aspirations. So there comes a point in every long cycle when the order is producing far more men who expect a place at the top than it has places to give — a surplus of qualified, ambitious, credentialed claimants for whom there is no chair. And these surplus elites, Turchin and Goldstone showed, are the most dangerous material a society contains: not the poor, who lack the means to organize, but the *thwarted near-elite*, who have the education, the connections, the rhetorical and organizational skill, and above all the burning sense of a promised place denied. It is they who turn revolutionary; it is they who fracture the apex from below the apex.

The counter-elite that leads the crowd

This is the finding that completes the project's thesis, and it is worth stating in its starkest form, the way its authors do: popular unrest does not, by itself, fracture an elite; it furnishes the *fuel* that frustrated elite aspirants use to fight the incumbents. The leadership of every great movement of "the people" turns out, on inspection, to be a counter-elite of disappointed insiders. The French Revolution was led by lawyers and journalists and minor nobles shut out of the careers their talents demanded — Robespierre the provincial advocate, the whole Jacobin cadre a surplus of educated men with nowhere to rise. The Russian Revolution was led by the radicalized children of the gentry and the professional classes — Lenin himself the son of a noble state official. The pattern is universal because the mechanism is structural: the common man supplies the numbers, but he does not supply the leadership, the programme, the organization, or the strategy, because those require exactly the elite formation he was denied. He is mobilized as a strategic resource in a war between an incumbent elite and a counter-elite — the fuel, once again, and not the spark. And this is why the morning after every revolution made in the people's name discloses a new elite in the seats of the old one: because it was an elite, the counter-elite, that made it, all along.

PART VIII

THE WEIGHT THEY SWING

The honest objection — that to deny the common man the role of agent is not to deny that his pressure is a cause, for the credible threat of his rising is the lever that forces a cornered elite to widen the settlement, and the line to hold is between proximate agent and causal load

A thesis this hard must now be tested against its strongest objection, or it becomes the very thing this project forbids — a doctrine held because it is bold rather than because it is true. And the objection is real. To show that the common man is never the *proximate agent* of structural change — never the hand that cracks the floor — is not to show that his pressure is *causally nothing*. There is a reading, and it is the right one, in which the pressure from below is a genuine cause operating through a different channel: not by breaking the floor, which it cannot do, but by raising the standing cost of the settlement, by widening the cracks that elite quarrels open, and above all by shaping *what the winning faction must concede* to keep the common man mobilized on its side. The line to hold is therefore precise. The defensible claim is that the common man is never the proximate agent of structural change. The indefensible one — the overreach the cruder version commits — is that his pressure never matters at all.

The threat that corners the elite

The clearest proof that the pressure is a real cause comes from the cases where the floor seems *not* to have cracked and the elite widened the settlement anyway — the slow, peaceful ratchet of the British franchise across the nineteenth century, the Reform Acts that no war and no obvious fracture compelled. The best modern analysis of these cases, by the economists Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson, rescues the project's thesis rather than refuting it, and the dynamic it describes is worth following closely. An elite facing a credible threat of revolution, they show, would much prefer to buy the threat off cheaply — with a temporary concession, a tax cut, a promise of better treatment. But here it meets a *commitment problem*: a promise can be revoked the moment the threat recedes, the people know this, and so a mere promise does not actually defuse the danger. To make the concession *credible* — to convince the dangerous mass that the better treatment will outlast the present crisis — the elite must surrender something it cannot easily take back, and the franchise, a permanent transfer of institutional power, is exactly such a thing. So the vote is extended not from conviction but as a *credible commitment*, the cheapest durable way to defuse a threat that cannot be cheaply bought off. And what makes the threat credible enough to force the concession? Almost always, on inspection, a floor already cracking somewhere — a recently fractured elite, a war just fought or feared, a revolution next door: the British reform debates of 1832 and 1867 were conducted in the long shadow of the French risings of 1830 and 1848, with the cracked floor across the Channel doing the arguing. So even the peaceful cases run on the threat of the floor cracking, and the common man's pressure is the thing that makes the threat credible. The Chartists, who lost every one of their demands in their own lifetimes and saw almost all of them granted within two generations, won not by force, which would have been crushed, but by making the cost of refusal so legible that a later, more frightened elite found conceding cheaper than holding out. The pressure from below is real. It is simply not, and never is, the proximate agent. It is the weight on the lever — and the lever is worked above.

Part IX

THE DIGNIFYING MYTH

Why the false story is universal — because the settlement that has widened its circle would rather tell the newly admitted that they rose and won than that they were let in when a frightened elite found it cheaper to deal them in — and what seeing through it is finally for

Gather the four cracks and the picture is complete, and it is the inverse of the one we are taught. Structural change does not rise from the base; it descends through a broken floor. It comes when the elite *fractures* and arms the people against itself, when it *exhausts* its floor in war and must pay the survivors, when it is *conquered* by a rival elite and remade at bayonet-point, or when it *overbreeds* and its surplus turns revolutionary and leads the crowd as fuel — and in every case the common man is the weight one broken faction swings, present at the opening but never its author, the proximate agent of nothing, the causal load on a lever worked from above. This is the demand side of the whole project: the studies before explained why the settlement holds, and this one explains the only way it ever moves, which is when the floor that holds it cracks.

The myth, and the use of seeing through it

There remains the question the study opened with — why, if this is how change works, the world is so universally taught the opposite, that the people rose and the people won. The answer is the last application of this project's central idea, and it closes the circle. The story of the rising people is not a neutral error; it is the *settlement's own account of itself*, the managed belief applied to the one subject the belief most needs to manage — the question of how the circle of the settlement came to widen. For an order that has admitted the common man to some share of the settlement has two ways to narrate the admission, and they are not equal. It can tell him the truth: that he was let in when a fractured, exhausted, or frightened elite found it cheaper to deal him in than to keep him out. Or it can tell him the flattering lie: that he *rose*, that he *won*, that he *earned* his place by his own courage and conscience. The lie is enormously more stabilizing, because a man who believes he won his place will defend the order that he thinks he wrested his place from, while a man who knows he was merely admitted on a cold calculation owes it no such loyalty. So the dignifying myth is not an accident of sentimental history; it is part of the machine, a load-bearing belief that converts a concession wrung from weakness into a victory owed to virtue, and binds the newly admitted to the settlement by their pride. To see through it is the point of this study — and the seeing is not, in the end, a counsel of despair or a contempt for the common man, whose courage at the openings was always real and whose pressure on the lever is a genuine cause. It is a map. For if change comes at the cracks and not from the patient accumulation of risings, then the work of widening the settlement is not to wait for a spontaneous rising that a functioning floor will only crush, but to make the cost of the old settlement so legible, so continuously and undeniably legible, that when the floor does crack — and floors always, in time, crack — the cornered elite finds it cheaper to widen the circle than to hold the line. The common man does not break the floor. But he can be the reason that, when it breaks, the order that rises in its place has room in it for him. That is the whole of what the seeing is for.